

Letter from Rev. A. Kelsey

June 30th, 1857

BR. J.M. AUSTIN:- After the great calamity of a removal I feel a desire to utter a few thoughts which are suggested by the times, and if you think best you may cause them to appear in the *Ambassador*.

We left Newark with its pleasant externals and many attracting friendships on the first day of April, and reached the beautiful village of Albion the same day, attended by the grand storm of snow which seemed to say "April fool" after two days of pleasant weather which had gone before it. Then commenced that agreeable variety of labor which constitutes the "spice" if not some of the *pepper* of life, in settling a new family in a new home. Shall I give some particulars? White-washing and black-washing; mending stove holes and pumps, lengthening or shortening stove-pipe and repairing door-steps; rolling barrels and lifting boxes, with all those other refined and refining exercises which are demanded on such occasions, have made the past quarter of a year spicy enough.

But we are now settled in our own house, ready to call it home for a season, and we mean to do so for some time to come if life and health are spared. We have opened our house to boarders, and I have purchased 8 acres of good land for the purpose of small farming to help us live.

And what is most agreeable of all, I am now able to dismiss for a time, the unwelcome thought of being obliged to leave the ministry to gain a living: a thought which has been very oppressive to me after more than 20 years of constant service.

The increased expense of living for a few of the past years has made it apparent that small families only can be sustained by the mass of our Societies.- I have felt the pressure of the times most severely, notwithstanding my settlement with a Society of considerable means, and some most generous men.- If all were alike liberal in proportion to their means, a family like mine might be supported in Newark.

I am now engaged all the time by our Societies at Clarendon and Fairhaven, two services a day on alternate Sundays in the two places, and a third service is held at South Barre and other places, for which I expect to receive some compensation, perhaps enough to make out a moderate salary for the year. If "surprise parties" become popular as far West as Albion next fall, we stand a pretty good chance for a living this year.

Our friends in this section seem quite earnest and united. The Fairhaven Society is preparing to live again, and sustain the cause of truth and righteousness. Clarendon has not been destitute of preaching but a very little of the time since our church was erected. At South Barre and Barre Center good congregations attend our services. In Albion we have many friends, and if a suitable place for meetings could be obtained, I have no doubt but a very respectable congregation would be gathered.

On the whole I am well pleased with the present prospects of our cause in this region. I am more than pleased. I am agreeably surprised by the prompt action of our friends, considering the backwardness of the season, and the unpromising signs of the times. But good weather has commenced, and our farmers will soon feel more hopeful. Not many years hence our beautiful faith must raise its standard in Albion and Brockport. Its mission is needed. If properly and truthfully understood, no class of our citizens would be opposed to such an enterprise.

I cannot willingly lay down my pen without referring to the places where my earlier efforts were made for the cause of truth. In Morganville my humble labors as a minister were commenced. And there we built a pleasant church in connection with the Christian society, owning one half. For several years its walls resounded with the glad notes of salvation. But death and removals have finally given it over to destruction. Desolation now claims it for her own. The fact is a sad one to me. I remember the friends who there urged me forward to give public utterance to the beautiful truth which was burning in my heart, and who listened with

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apparent profit to my communications. All gone. Who shall move in the work of reopening that dilapidated temple, where once the people heard the joyful sound?

Pavilion was the place of my first settlement. Earnest and charitable friends held up my feeble hands and seemed pleased and profited by my humble ministry. The Society in that place lives on.- But O, what changes have been wrought! Many of the truly worthy have gone to their long home. And lately our very excellent and christian brother, James Sprague, has been called to that better home. I knew him well for years. I lived with him, in his own house, and met him daily year after year, and I am certain that here was a good and honest man. Community suffers a loss in the departure of such a man from earth.

At Portageville, and Nunda and Middleport, some of the most excellent of our Societies have gone the way of all earth, and others have removed, so that many seats in our churches which were once filled with worshippers.

Brs. Richardson, Dunlap, Tyler, Grover, Sprague, Olmstead, Cruttendens, and others, are not before me with their earnest countenances to inspire my heart. The question comes to me with solid force, "Our fathers, where are they?" The world answers, "Gone to the silent tomb." And with that answer I am assured that their presence can no more lend me its strength as in former times, to fight the battle of truth and right. Their liberal purses shall no more minister to my necessities to help me finish out the life labors of my calling, nor their high-toned sense of justice and right defend me in my efforts to conquer the evils of the world.

Every year which sweeps by with its steady pace deprives me of the companionship of some of those dear soldiers who stood by me in former years.- Those whose honest zeal and stable friendship were founded upon truth and right are passing away, and soon if life is spared I shall miss them all. Where are they? It is a question of vital importance. Shall I meet them no more forever? Philosophy cannot tell. Shall we ever come together in social communication to comprehend the actual results of earnest efforts for good? My religion answers yes, and my heart rejoices in that answer.

Together in a more perfect life we shall be allowed to review our associated activities in this life, and with a clearer perception shall we understand wherein we were right, and how we were wrong.... And the truth will be known to all, in its unclouded reality. With this assurance I can labor on till my work is finished, only praying that I may not be left to disgrace the memory of those who have fallen in their integrity at my side.

Christian Ambassador, Auburn NY, Sat. 18 Jul 1857

Transcribed on 9 Jan 2007 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY